

OLD BELLS AND NEW.

"Tales of Ten Travelers" Series.

By EDGAR L. WAKEMAN.

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For a time, at least, our Ten Travelers were to be separated. The pleasant apartment in our ancient inn, in which we had met each week in the year in genial reunion, was again, as it had been for centuries before, to know new and ever-shifting occupants, and be put to rights daily for strange faces and always heedless guests.

We had come together for our last meeting. Those who had severally been narrators and those who had as often comprised their sympathetic audiences, were to part company and be scattered in their various callings upon their differing ways. The reflection that the dear old spot was finally to be deserted, sobered and saddened nearly every face of our company as it came together there.

"Well, this is far from being a sorry occasion," the Gypsy Traveler at last remarked with some timidity. "For out and out good cheer, I'd much prefer to be among my dark-eyed friends huddling in their ragged alleys the dripping edges of Epping Forest."

"And I, among the Umbrian 'stamen' of the North," added the Clerical Traveler, who had had some strange experiences among the wild glens and pastures of the romantic English lake region.

"Or, still among the half-brigand caravans of the southern mountains of Cuba," added the Chronic Traveler, with a reminiscient sigh.

"I think I could find keener relief for a New Year's Eve, even among the lowly peasantry of the winsome Kerry shores, or with the Cagots of the snow-capped Pyrenees," said the Vagabond Traveler, dolefully.

"Why, the grumbling pensioners of Chile," urged the Student Traveler, "who have nothing to be thankful for but housing and loathsome Australian mutton, are a brighter lot to-night than we."

"No doubt. The wee-wee cottagers of Grouha Green are no more silent and glum than we have so far been," chirped the Morose Traveler. "I'm for going in for something livelier than a 'watch-night' for our last meeting."

"That's it!" interjected the Aimless Traveler, bustlingly. "I'm also for 'going in for something,' like our spirited friend here."

The suggestion seemed to brighten the faces of the assembled company, and there were furtive glances toward the steaming bowl upon the table.

We were all quickly seated around it, with the Clerical Traveler at the post of honor; when "Speech!" "Speech!" was imperatively called by a chorus of friendly voices.

"I should prefer," suggested the Clerical Traveler, impressively, "that the few hours we have now together—perhaps our last hours in this charming retreat as an unbroken company—should be devoted to desultory and friendly conversation. There are things and thoughts to be remembered aside from ourselves. I see that pencils are busy, perhaps, upon appropriate themes and sentiments which we may tenderly dwell upon during the passing hours of the year," he concluded, filling our cups with a sparkling brand.

"I now propose," said the Clerical Traveler, "as our first toast of the evening, and as peculiarly appropriate to the occasion and the hour—'Old, Tried and True!' May such friendships ever grow more real and steadfast here and in all the lands hallowed by friendships, loves and homes, the solemn New Year's Eve!"

We drank the toast in silence, when, we were certainly entering another gloomy period of introspective reflection. Each of our Ten Travelers seemed busied with his own thoughts. Whatever these may have been, each individual had already grown into a tense and nervous mood.

The crackling of the blazing knots within the cavernous fireplace brought sudden starts and anxious movements to some. The sighing of the night wind in the huge chimney seemed to distress and distract others. The ticking of the great clock in the corner gave out a deep and ominous sound. Our dog, Nero, now and then looked up from his rug and softly whined. The lights and shadows in the newly polished panels curiously resolved themselves into grotesque figures. And more than one of us noticed, with something like anxious interest, that in places of the one light tread we had infrequently seemed to hear on the floor above our ceiling, there was now clearly audible the sound of two walkers' foot-falls which beat, beat, beat, with a penetrative regularity back and forth upon the softly creaking deals.

"Wonder if the old place is haunted?" quizzically inquired the Commercial Traveler, with a gesture of his head toward the ceiling.

"No doubt; no doubt!" promptly replied the aimless Traveler with some emphasis. "All those old historic London inns are haunted."

"With returned claimants for overcharges by the sad dogs, their landlords?" cynically interrupted the Merry Traveler.

"By the very tragedies which have culminated within their chambers," insisted the Chronic Traveler with spirit. "Every apartment could tell its gruesome tale of the past—of blighted hopes, of loss and discouragement, of strange meetings and bitter separations, of loves awakening to the hollowness of deception and treachery, of suicide and crime, and, worse than all, of lives fading out in loneliness, silence and despair."

"Come, come! Let's think of pleasant wreaths this New Year's Eve," urged the Clerical Traveler with just a hint of a shudder in his broad shoulders.

"A toast then," ventured the Morose Traveler with momentary enthusiasm, "to all the tales here told!"

"Hear!—hear!" came heartily from all at the huge oak table.

"To the 'Tales of Ten Travelers' it shall be," returned the Clerical Traveler. "May their fruitful influence be as benignant as their making and telling have been kindly, genial and pure!"

He said this so glowingly, so like a noble parent leading his offspring out to the edge of the great world's untrodden lands with prayer and blessing, that this toast, too, was drunk and applauded and suppressed murmurs of wholehearted accord.

But there it was again, that regular, persistent tread as of two feeble but tireless walkers directly over our heads.

Quick looks of mutual surprise passed rapidly about the table.

"Most extraordinary!" half-whispered the unusually quiet Commercial Traveler.

Here the Student Traveler passed a slip of paper to our chairman, who read its contents with brightening face.

"Very good; very good, indeed," he went on cheerily, again pouring the steaming liquid into our cups with so chary a caution that it evoked friendly protests from many of the company.

"I am now asked to propose," he re-

sumed, "the toast—and it is a most fitting one here this night—'To the tender wreaths of those who have passed before us here.'"

"Hear! Hear!" "May their loving presences linger!" "May their shadows never grow less!" and other like hearty outbursts quickly followed; and for the first time during the evening there were now a clinking of cups and a rousing clatter of good cheer as they came ringing merrily down upon the table.

Something of a buzz of genial conversation ensued. But it soon dwindled into snatches of broken remarks and rejoinders, for a common distracting influence was subtly weaving its witchy spell upon and about us.

While we had last toasted and cheered there had been a cessation of the measured foot-falls overhead, but only a cessation. It was as though the walkers had been challenged by our toasts to the wreaths of our own friendly-told tales; had listened for a moment as with some keen and intense longing of hearing, and then, missing the modulation of kind tones in our voices, the ghostly beat, beat, beat upon the softly creaking deals had been undisturbedly resumed.

Here a blazing knot in the fireplace burst with a detonation which sent Nero scurrying from his rug and caused various movements of restlessness at our table. Several of us spoke reassuringly to the animal, but he would not return to his accustomed place.

"No wonder!" exclaimed the Casual Traveler, springing from the table and leaning over an oaken settle in the angle-nook. "Look here, at this manifestation. One of these panels has jumped wide open. It has suken hinges, too!"

He pushed his hand and arm into the dark orifice, but was rewarded by the discovery of nothing but dust and cobwebs. He listened a moment attentively.

"That unaccountable tramp is very plainly heard here. Strange, too; it seems to come now from below, now from some side apartment, and again distinctly from above us. Listen! Can you hear St. Paul's?"

We listened alertly. The stout walls deadened the sound, and the night outside was so tempestuous that we could scarcely hear its seeming muffled strokes.

The Casual Traveler saw this in our faces, and cried out:

"Come here, quickly!" We hurried to his side, our attentive heads bunched before the open panel. Almost thunderous came the closing strokes of ten from the mammoth clock of old St. Paul's; and just as this was done our own clock tremulously struck the hour.

With a whimsical impulse one of our number flung the panel shut. We could not reopen it. Discontinuing our efforts, we at last returned to the table, unpleasantly depressed by the trifling occurrence; and each one of our number apparently bent on showing how little he had been affected by the incident. This brought on a period of pretentious hilarity, in which jest and repartee, rollicking song and reminiscence were invoked to dispel the dismal influence upon us.

When this enforced diversion was at its height, the landlord appeared with two servants. One brought a tremendous tray laden with a cold collation we had ordered, and the other replenished our huge bowl with what the good little Autocrat of America so aptly termed "old particular."

The landlord dismissed his helpers and lingered a moment to beam on us with a landlord's wise look of toleration and approval, not unmingled with a tinge of melancholy over the near loss of such genteel and profitable guests.

Just as he was backing out of the room with uncouth grimaces and bows, the Gypsy Traveler plumped the inquiry at him:

"See here, Splitpenny, have you any witches or warlocks bundled away in your musty old rooms?"

"Witches or warlocks?" "Yes, ghosts, bogies, bugaboos!" added the Clerical Traveler with a touch of severity.

Old Splitpenny's face lengthened as he answered evasively:

"Oh should I have time for such diversions? I opes you've everything snug an' tidy, now sirs."

He began again to grimacingly back through the doorway, when the Student Traveler insisted:

"But, tell us, now, Splitpenny, is there anything unusual going on about the inn—only one suffering or in trouble, here alongside us?"

"Lor! 'Ow can any gentleman, like you, be thinkin' o' th' like o' that, on such a night o' all th' year? If anythink more's needed jess make it known, sirs. I'm just down at th' tap, sirs. She'll be a 'eavin' directly, in front o' St. Paul's, sirs!"

The landlord here referred to the thousands who would soon be gathering before and about the great Cathedral, to add their annual din to the clamor of the bells, when the midnight chime was rung; but his manner and remarks had not lessened the restlessness of our company.

Our clock sounded the hour of eleven in fits and starts as though the ancient gear was pawing with the passing year. Tremulous skirlings as of the complaining wind played dirge-like threnodies within the massive chimney.

The night's wild energies were making havoc among the neighboring tiles and chimney-pots; and that tramp, tramp, tramp, over our heads—which had again for an instant ceased, as though some one was listening for a coming which never came—seemed more than ever reluctant in its entry-like tread.

Our Ten Travelers' faces lengthened. We arose as if by common impulse from the table, and some of the pipes were nervously lighted; when various members of the company disposed themselves in chairs and settles about the room.

"If that ghostly tread doesn't soon cease," observed the Student Traveler grimly, "we are certainly destined to a dismal parting at the passing of the year."

It could possibly suggest, mused the Vagabond Traveler, "that we might celebrate our parting a little differently, say by accomplishing some immediate good; by discovering among the millions, not thousands, of hopeless ones in this vast Babel some one brave but suffering here—just as is so frequently and entertainingly told in our Tales—and really setting his feet and face toward new life and light with the birth of another year."

"Good!" "Capital!" "We'll all go in for that!" and the like, promptly greeted this unexpected proposal.

The Clerical Traveler had sat silent while these various preferences were being expressed. At least he calmly remarked:

"I have always observed that what is usually set out upon, something in the nature of a Quixotic quest. The human mind is adverse to contemplating sorrow in one's own family, or distresses in

one's immediate neighborhood. We have now scarcely an hour until midnight. I think we have all been most strikingly impressed with the feeling that there might be something," and here he cast a significant glance toward the ceiling, "within the very walls of this old inn deserving our charitable attention."

The imperative footsteps above us seemed as an echoing answer; and the unhappy and almost ghastly influence instantly fell like a sable pall upon us all; but one.

The Aimless Traveler had applauded heartily. Then he turned and faced us in an unusual state of excitement.

"The very hour, place and conditions!" he exclaimed with great animation. "Here, travelers all, I wish you to examine this!"

He took from his pocket a tiny wooden phial and tossed it eagerly among us. It was caught by ready hands and wonderingly examined. It was covered with miniature carvings of marvelously wrought monkeys, serpents and birds. The stopper was also of wood and still more strikingly carved than the phial itself. It was finally returned with exclamations of curiosity and surprise. Its very existence among us seemed to have intensified our super-sensitive alertness to the hovering influence of ghostliness and dread.

"Some years since," he began, while holding the phial fascinatingly before us, between the thumb and middle finger, with the air of a conjurer, "I was aimlessly wandering in the British Indian districts of Chittagong, across the Bay of Bengal from Calcutta."

"In the little city of Islamabad I rescued, through the influence of personal friendship with British officials, a fakir of great age and sanctity, from the, to him, ineffaceable degradation of imprisonment for some of his forbidden practices. He departed from the city to his hut in the mountains above—after promising to return and requite me and securing my pledge that I would remain in Islamabad until the evening of the fifth day—by his peculiar and outlandish method of locomotion, that of rolling in a round coil, like a hoop-snake, end over end; and I at once dismissed the incident from my mind as an interesting phase of Oriental life, never expecting to see the hideous and repulsive wretch again."

"But he kept his promise. On the evening of the fifth day, having been summoned to the courtyard of my inn, I found the venerable fakir awaiting me, more emaciated and wretched in appearance than before, the outcome, he asserted, of self-imposed suffering and torture, coupled with fasting, incantations and other horrible practices, which had produced the contents of this curious little phial, which you now see. This, he said, was to be my priceless reward."

Here he paused for a moment. The wind sighed lugubriously. The foot-falls above us seemed penetrating our apartment, and ghostly hands, some of us fancied, were fluttering from the dark panels behind.

"I have forgotten," resumed the Aimless Traveler conclusively, "the many marvelous points attributed by my Indian friend to what still remains within this phial, for it has never been opened; but I recall one ascribed power, with especial clearness to-night, from the peculiar and I may say startling phenomena which have similarly affected every one of us here."

"It is this: When the powder is cast upon fire, so long as its flame shall continue, every object near us will become clearly discernable. Every soul within this inn will be subject to our instant inspection. It will chain spectral spirits to our bidding. It will even, so its maker asserted, reveal the secrets of the dead. One condition only must exist—that we who invoke the spell shall be of one mind and heart, and these solely bent on good intent! Travelers all, shall this eastern spell be wrought?"

We had involuntarily huddled together, and a whispered, half-shuddering assent was faintly given.

The Aimless Traveler stepped quickly past us, turned off the lights, moved softly to the fire-place and tossed the contents of the phial among the brightest embers.

For a brief period of time a sickening odor filled the room. This was followed by a dense darkness, in which there were stifled exclamations and quick gaspings of each others' hands and arms. Suddenly fierce tongues of flame leaped roaringly up the chimney, escaped again by impenetrable darkness and gloom; and in a moment more a supernatural light filtered through and through every division wall and every floor and ceiling of the ancient inn.

Every guest in every apartment, every scene of anxiety, placidity or festivity was as clearly revealed as though we were participants in each. Every beam, every rafters, every bent and gnarled piece of studding, every lath, every brick and every dash of mortar, while retaining its form, was still translucent and liquidly clear as a pane of polished glass.

The most astounding feature of this condition was that our own bodies were as pellucid as all other material things. It even seemed that the action of each other's vital organs, the wondrous journeys of blood, the depositing of molecules and particles and the displacement and renewal of tissues, and even that hitherto impenetrable mystery, the very action and thought formulation of the brain, were momentarily subject to most minute analysis by our still ordinarily conscious minds.

Whether this miracle of oriental diabolism continued for moments or minutes, at last, as if with one impulse of mental concentration, the material sight and the spiritual mind of our company were turned toward the source of the still imperative footfalls above us.

One glance, a glance quickly and successively transformed from intense and curious interest to surprise, and indignation, sufficed to disclose the material personality who had so insistively and recurrently dispossessed us of nearly every inanimate spirit of the night.

In an almost windowless carpet, corresponding precisely with the dimensions of our own apartment, were an old, old man of peculiarly commanding head and shoulders and body dwindling to almost nothingness in its downward course, like a shriveled beet, and a little old woman companion, tramp, tramp, tramping in some remorseless vigil that must be done.

The room was furnitureless and fireless. One deal table, a bed on which lay scant but clearly ragged, a low volume of lidless books and stacks upon stacks of dusty, dog-eared manuscript, with a few valueless belongings and keepsakes of better days, were all the bitingly cheerless place contained.

The old man's face was already set and vacuous, as though the irreversibility of hopelessness was almost fixed behind it. The wife's pinched and bloodless face was stamped with the lines and shapings of that heroism which only death can dim or end; and slight and fragile as she was, she seemed to quite sustain her companion upon his feeble and reluctant feet.

With a fierce and hopeful energy she pressed him on and on, now and then chiding his trembling hands which cheerily urged:

"Have courage, father dear! The coils are gone, but it's a brave way we have of keeping nice and warm! Faith, now, this is the way, sixty years ago, we

tramped the hills behind old Youghal by the sea!"

"Yes, yes, Kate, love!—but will they never come?" he moaned while wearily hanging back as if to listen and to rest.

"Come, is it? Can't you see the face of St. Paul's dial there? It lacks an hour of twelve!—Holy Mother of God! Look down in mercy here!" This with averted head. "You wouldn't ask them to come before the year was done; now would you, father dear?"

"I'm very hungry and cold," he moaned, as if unheeding or unhearing her pitiful encouragements. "Will they be ready to print it at once; at once, Kate, love? before—before I'm gone?"

"Ready—ready, is it, cushion, asthore! Let them but see the great work you've done; let them but lay eyes on these beautiful pages; let them but now know the stores of lore on dear old Ireland you've got from this day, to away back behind the flood; let them but understand how your whole blessed life was bled, drop by drop, into the immortal life of your Encyclopedia Hibernica; and you'll be the greatest and most glorious of men!"

"Won't Splitpenny let it all, Kate, love?" he asked with childish fear and trepidation.

"Splitpenny, indeed! Ah, no, father dear, never fear. He's but borrowed our trifles here to send them back in a great New Year's surprise. It'll be the glad day, father dear, when your happy eyes see it all. Holy Mother of God! Look down! Look down!"

It seemed that our hearts would burst from this tragedy above our heads, for the infinite heroism of the wife, the seeming approaching mortal dissolution of the husband, the agony of their dolor, of their helplessness, and the spell on us rendering us motionless and helpless where we sat, with the very pulses in our veins all but still, but in an instant more, after a few tremulous flashings and palings in the fire-place, the end of the marvelous spell had come.

"Send instantly for Splitpenny!" thundered the Clerical Traveler, as the rest of us, with blanched faces, sat regarding each other, the Aimless Traveler, or the ceiling, in stupefied dismay.

"What about the poor old wretches above our heads, sir?" he sternly demanded when the bland and beaming head of our landlord had entered our door.

"The O'Briens?" he retorted with a puzzled look. "What? Why, sirs, they aren't worth meddling! 'E's nowt but a writer. Bah! Aren't any o' 'em worth a periwinkle, sirs! You gets knows as much!"

This rejoinder precipitated some excitement among our Ten Travelers; but the Clerical Traveler hushed it with a gesture of his hand and continued:

"How long have they been in that horrible den?"

"Nigh on 't' twenty year, sir."

"How long have they been doing out their books, clothing and keepsakes to you for their scant housing here?"

"Well, on toward two year, sir."

"Where are these articles, and for how much will you sell them?"

"Piled in th' nor-west corner o' th' lumber room, across th' 'all from your door, sirs. A matter o' twenty pound will take 'em, sirs."

"Here!" "here!" "here!" and "clink!" "clink!" "clink!" and "Give us the key instantly!" followed this with astounding rapidity.

"And now," blurted the Morose Traveler chokingly, "what is the least penny for which you will let this very apartment by the year, with service, excellent service, mind!—for two?"

Old Splitpenny cursed his lips and surprisingly blew off the reply of:

"A—matter o'—seventy pound—sirs!"

"Here!" "here!" and "Clink!" "clink!" "clink!" were repeated with startling celerity.

"And good, toothsome, honest, comforting food—for the year, for two?" spluttered the Student Traveler. "For—our friends, the O'Briens!" he almost hysterically added.

Old Splitpenny fairly panted; but he asthmatically blew off his reply of:

"Lor! They aren't 'ard't keep. Make it—a matter o'—fifty pound."

"Here!" "Here!" rustlings of crisp bank notes and "clink!" "clink!" "clink!" followed as swiftly and as startlingly boisterous as before, while the landlord's eyes were nearly starting from their sockets.

"We'll call on our way out for receipts!" cried one. "Send up another bowl of punch!" insisted another. "And the best brewing of tea that ever simmered under a coesey—for two!" vociferated another; and then it seemed that all our Ten Travelers, in a sort of sectional gurgle of triumph, roared out:

"And now, you old dragon—"

"Get—"

"Out!"

"Lively!"

And lively it was all around now. Lively the ferocious shaking of hands between each other; lively the tumbling into the lumber room and out again with those precious belongings, "piled in th' nor-west corner," lively their rearrangement in indescribable welcoming comfort within our own apartment—the O'Briens' apartment now; lively as a lot of harum-scarum boys our ascent of the creaking stairway and rescuing assault upon this cavern of darkness and gloom; lively and considerate, uplifting and revivifying as the uttermost blessing of human revelation, our re-kindling of the old couple's lives and hopes; lively still our actual carrying of their starvation-lightened bodies, their priceless manuscripts and their pitiful belongings into the warmth and light below; lively yet our plying their shriveled lips with punch and tea and food, while swearing great oaths, which we shall loyally keep, to hold them both within the glow of ample comfort until O'Brien's Encyclopedia Hibernica is immortally safe between the saving lids of books; lively, the shouts and cheers at the poor old wife pattingly stroking her husband's weary head and faltering: "Ah, father dear, 'twas the abiding faith in the glorious toil that brought the blessed hours!"—while livelier than all else, the tears of gladness raining inexpressible response from all our hearts of joy!

But listen! Above the cheer among us the sweet and measured tones of the midnight hour are sounding from our faithful corner clock. We pause for hand pressure of unspeakable utterance with our white faced wards, now seated side by side with loyal hands entwined. We breathe upon them "Happy New Years!" true, which return, without speech, in holiest blessings. We steal softly from them there, and hence

in the hallway, with huddled heads, for a last look at the dear old room and its now almost worthless occupants; while the Clerical Traveler, with one outspread, upraised hand in benediction upon them, the other back above our heads in benediction upon us, almost whispers: "May such faithful hand-clasp as those old lovers know, be ours when the silences are near; and may the peace which passeth understanding remain with them, and all of us, forevermore. Amen!" Melodiously, peacefully, joyously now, as we pass from the dear old place together, we hear the chime from the campanile of mighty St. Paul's; and, blending with all the exultation of a glad New Year's birth, there seems to tremble across the din of the multitude's voices below the modulation of hopeful, happy song:

OLD BELLS AND NEW.

Oring, old bells! Let all your wildest notes Leap like impassioned love within your throats! A world's heart thrills the moaned voices sing: "The year is dead! Long live the newborn King!"

Oring, sweet bells! Let tenderest olden tones Blend with the new, through all the circling zones: To hearts of men in the glad chiming bring: The best of old, to crown the new-born King!

Ring, merriment bells of Old and New! All earth is born again with each glad New Year's birth! Beyond the highest water flows the spring: O'er death, eternal life is blossoming!

IRWIN'S CASE.

The Discretionary Pool Operator Will Return Money to His Victims.

PITTSBURGH, Dec. 28.—George M. Irwin, the discretionary pool operator, has decided to return all the money placed in his hands by customers, and which was not actually invested by him in grain deals. This statement was made authoritatively by J. Scott Ferguson, Irwin's chief counsel, yesterday.

Mr. Ferguson says that his client is morally, but not legally, bound to return the money. He further said that not over \$10,000 to \$20,000 is represented in the suits against Irwin.

America Won't Take Part.

CONSTANTINOPLE, Dec. 28.—It now seems definitely decided that the United States Minister Alexander Terrell does not intend to send anybody to make an independent inquiry into the stories told of Turkish atrocities in Armenia.

The motive of this decision, it is believed, is probably because such an inquiry is not necessary in view of the fact that the powers signatory to the Berlin treaty particularly England are supervising the inquiry which is being made on behalf of the Turkish government.

Miss Bancroft Married.

Boston, Dec. 28.—Capt. Carl Gustave Flash, an officer of the Swedish navy, was married to Miss Pauline Bancroft daughter of J. C. Bancroft and granddaughter of George Bancroft, the famous historian, at the First church last night.

How's This?

We offer One Hundred Dollars Reward for any case of Catarrh that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. F. J. CHENEY & Co., Prop., Toledo, O.

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